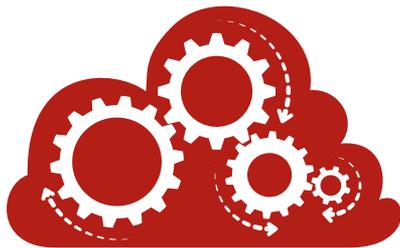


# ***NATIONAL GEAR UP*** **WEEK**



**A TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL-  
BASED PRACTITIONERS**



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**CELEBRATING OUR EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

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# Start the Year Off Right

Join thousands of students, parents, teachers, partners, and college access professionals from across the nation to celebrate GEAR UP and the successes of your hard work and dedication!

National GEAR UP Week 2020 is an opportunity for you to raise awareness about the positive impact GEAR UP is having locally. It's a time to engage all your strategic partners - local, state, and federal elected officials, funders, partners, as well as local, state, and regional media - to share your program's accomplishments and to get them more involved with your services to students and families.

The purpose is to...

- **Create awareness.**
- **Activate partners.**
- **Mobilize local champions.**

For additional tools, media and to learn more visit:  
[edpartnerships.org/national-gear-up-week](https://edpartnerships.org/national-gear-up-week)

Hold a GEAR UP Week at your school and get students thinking about their plans after high school! The ideas and activities in this toolkit will help you kick off the year with fun and exciting activities while promoting a college-going culture in your school and community. It provides ideas, instructions, posters, and more to promote and celebrate GEAR UP. It can be used to advertise current and upcoming services.

# Outreach & Media

Revise the following resources about GEAR UP Week to fit your school's GEAR UP needs.

- **Gubernatorial Proclamation** (available mid Sept)
  - Use this document to recognize the week and raise awareness in your community about the importance of postsecondary planning and the positive impact GEAR UP is having locally. You may also use this [proclamation request template](#) to request a proclamation for National GEAR UP Week from your Mayor.
- **Media Advisory** - This template is to notify media outlets in your area to cover the event you are hosting. Media advisories are distributed ahead of the event so that outlets can schedule and plan to cover your event.
- **Press Release** - This template will help you create some "buzz" about your event. You can send it out before or after the event takes place, just make sure you edit it accordingly!
- **Op-Ed: Guidelines & Talking Points** - Op-eds are a great way to raise awareness about GEAR UP at the local and regional level. Follow the tips and use the template in this resource to submit your op-ed to your news outlet.
- **Thank You Cards to Congress** - Thank your U.S. Senators and Representatives for supporting GEAR UP and other college access programs.

# Outreach & Media

- **Take Pictures** of your students' hard work and share them with Montana State GEAR UP. Be sure and take pictures of students and staff. Tag them: #GEARUPWorks #iHeartGU
- **Social Media** is a great way to stay connected with students. If you haven't already done so consider creating your own social media pages to remind students about upcoming GEAR UP events, deadlines, and activities you don't want them to miss. In addition, be sure and share the information MTGU posts on a weekly basis! Use the hashtag #MTGEARUP during GEAR UP Week.
  - [facebook.com/MontanaGearUp](https://facebook.com/MontanaGearUp)
  - [twitter.com/MontanaGearUp](https://twitter.com/MontanaGearUp)
  - [instagram.com/MontanaGearUp](https://instagram.com/MontanaGearUp)
- **Host virtual drop in hours** where students can ask college related questions
- **If possible, help with meal distribution to connect with students.** This is a great time to distribute paper copies of information around National GEAR UP Week and available GEAR UP services to students and families.
- **Provide phone advising.** Conduct phone counseling and advising to ensure they will meet graduation requirements and have a 7th year plan.

# Daily Announcements

Revise the following GEAR UP Week announcements to fit your school's outreach needs.

**Monday** - This week is National GEAR UP Week. We are a GEAR UP School. GEAR UP is at our school to help you graduate from high school and go onto college. At (Name of School), GEAR UP provides the following opportunities: (insert them here). Our GEAR UP staff is (Name) and their office is located (insert). There will be activities every day. Starting today, you have until Friday to decorate the door of your homeroom.

- **Student challenge:** Use the hashtag #MTGEARUP and post one reason you want to go to college on your social media.

**Tuesday** - Did you know, you can get a college degree in two to four years? There are over 4,000 colleges and universities nationwide. If you attend a school in Montana, it usually costs less. Students who obtain some form of education after high school report higher job satisfaction, experience less unemployment, and make about 40% more income than those with only a high school diploma.

- **Student challenge:** Ask one of your teachers where they went to college and what they liked best about it.

**Wednesday** - It is not too early to start thinking about what kind of career you might enjoy doing. The Montana Career Information System is a website that lets you explore your interests and discover what jobs...

# Daily Announcements

might be a fit. It also will tell you how much education you need and how much income you can make. If you need help using the Montana Career Information System website ask our GEAR UP staff for help.

- **Student challenge:** Tomorrow is GEAR UP T-Shirt Thursday. Wear your GU shirts!

**Thursday** - It takes planning to get into a Montana 4-year college.

1. Maintain a grade point average of 2.5.
  2. Take the following classes in high school:
    - 3 years of math, 4 years of English, 2 years of science, 3 years of social studies and 2 years of electives.
  3. Apply for funding to pay for college
    - Getting good grades can lead to scholarships, which is money you do not have to pay back. Work with our GEAR UP staff to learn more. We will help you apply for college in September and Financial Aid in October.
- **Student challenge:** Commit to graduating. Together with a friend make a commitment and plan to graduate from High School.

**Friday** - Thanks to everyone who has made National GEAR UP Week a huge success. GEAR UP is here to encourage you to plan to graduate and to plan to get further education. Here is a quote from Nelson Mandela to inspire you as you think about your future and what you would like to see happen for yourself and for your community: "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world."

# Daily Social Media Posts

Revise the following GEAR UP Week social media posts to fit your school's outreach needs using **#MTGEARUP**

## Monday -----

**Post 1:** We are a GEAR UP school. GEAR UP exists to help our students graduate and go on to some form of higher education.

**Post 2:** Find out how much income a high school graduate makes compared to students who do not graduate here:

[https://mus.edu/Prepare/Prepare/Why\\_Go\\_To\\_College.html](https://mus.edu/Prepare/Prepare/Why_Go_To_College.html)

**Post 3:** GEAR UP is one of the largest most effective programs that prepares students for college and career. Montana GEAR UP is in 19 schools across the state.

**Post 4:** Students who go on to some form of education after high school report higher job satisfaction, experience less unemployment, and make about 40% more income than those with only a high school diploma. Explore career options here:

<https://www.bls.gov/k12/>

## Tuesday -----

**Post 1:** GEAR UP provides the following opportunities at our school: tutoring, campus visits, STEM activities, help understanding financial aid, professional development for staff, and student leadership training.

**Post 2:** The GEAR UP team at (school name) includes: (name the staff). If you want to volunteer with GEAR UP or have a suggestion, please contact: (email)

# Daily Social Media Posts

## Wednesday -----

**Post 1:** Montana GEAR UP (GU) serves students in grades 7-12, and in their first year of college. We have three goals: The first is to improve the academic preparedness of students for college.

**Post 2:** GU offers supports to help our students stay on track and complete college credits while in high school.

**Post 3:** GU pays for every Junior at our school to take the ACT test. Check in for Goal 2 in our next post.

**Post 4:** GU's second goal is to help our students graduate and enroll in college. Local GU funds help buy software licenses for remediation services, and hire in-class aids to increase reading and math skills.

**Post 6:** (Insert school name) GU program hosts events designed to help students understand how to apply for college, how to apply for financial aid. Check in for Goal 3 in our next post.

**Post 7:** Goal 3 - GU helps students and families understand the many options available for education after high school, the benefits, and how to afford it.

**Post 8:** Did you know many post high school education options can take as little as a year or two of college to complete? From trades to four-year programs, Montana has all of the options to best serve students.



# Daily Social Media Posts

## Thursday -----

**Post 1:** GEAR UP events happen at (name of school) throughout the school year. Upcoming events include: College Application Week (CAW), which is September 28th through October 2nd and, (Insert details of time/location for the events)

**Post 2:** Senior students applying to a Montana institution of higher education during CAW will have the application fee waived or deferred.

**Post 3:** Mark your calendars because GEAR UP will also host FAFSA events during the month of October.

**Post 4:** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a crucial step along the way to college enrollment. Students who apply for financial aid before December 1st get priority funding, which may include funds that do not have to be paid back.

**Post 5:** The first day to submit a FAFSA each year is October 1st. Visit this site to learn more:  
<https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out>

## Friday -----

**Post 1:** How does GU help our middle school students? GU funds assessments for middle-schoolers to see how track their developmental and academical abilities.

**Post 2:** GU sponsors summer camps, mostly on campus, for Junior High students to explore STEM subjects.

**Post 3:** GU provides high-schoolers with ACT Prep boot camps to help them prepare for the ACT, access to dual enrollment coursework, campus visits, and academic panning tools.

# Games & Activities

Check out the following college knowledge and cooperative learning games. Adapt for remote learning or school specific needs.

## **College Knowledge Passport**

Provide students with a College Knowledge Passport. Think of this activity as a treasure hunt meets trivia. You will need to get your school staff on board - teachers act as the countries that students need to visit.

Provide your staff with the list of College Knowledge Passport Questions/Statements (avoid staff asking students the same trivia questions). Students take their passport and visit different school staff where they will be asked a College Knowledge Question. If the student gets the question right the school staff person signs the student's passport in the space provided. Have students turn in their College Knowledge Passport at the end of the week to be eligible for a drawing to win a prize.



**Resource:** [Sample Passport Questions/Statements](#)

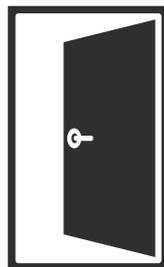
## **College Knowledge Pictionary**

Use this game to help students become familiar with college lingo. Divide students into teams. Teams should designate one person to draw per round. The designated "artist" picks a clue/term from the moderator (GEAR UP staff) such as "dorm" or "lab" then draws that clue without speaking or gesturing. If the drawing team successfully guesses the clue within the time limit, they get a point. Briefly discuss the term afterward to ensure students understand the meaning and relevance of that term as it relates to college.

# Games & Activities

## **Door Wars**

Students and teachers work together and decorate their homeroom or advisory classroom door in a college theme. The winning door(s) get a special classroom prize. Be sure to have enough supplies to outfit the needs of all teachers and students participating. Start Monday and conclude Friday of GEAR UP Week.



## **Reality Fair**

Reality or life simulations are educational. They rely on staff and community members to play mock roles in students lives. Students are given scenarios that place them in the future after obtaining some form of higher education. The simulation gives students an opportunity to experience what life looks like on their own, with financial responsibilities.

**Resource:** [WSECU's Digital Reality Fair](#) (sign up required)

## **Scavenger Hunt**

Run a school-wide scavenger hunt. Have GEAR UP students locate important college planning resources. Announce winners at a pep rally at the end of the week. Variation: Hide GEAR UP logos with college facts printed on the back all over the school. Give a prize to the student who finds the most.

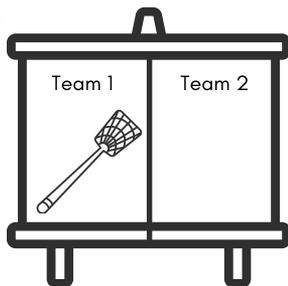


**Resource:** [Montana College Facts Scavenger Hunt](#) and [Scavenger Hunt Toolkit & Game Prints](#)

# Games & Activities

## **SWAT College Readiness Game**

Split into teams. Divide the whiteboard or poster paper into sections. Assign each team a section. Write college terms randomly on each side of the board or paper. Both teams should have the same words but in different locations. Teams should choose a team name and pick one player to start as the “swatter”. Put a piece of masking tape on the floor several feet away from the board/paper. All team members except the “swatter” must stay behind the tape line. Give a fly swatter to each team’s starting player. Ask a college knowledge question. The first to swat the correct answer wins a point. Discuss to reinforce understanding.



## **GEAR UP or College Gear Day**

Encourage students and teachers to wear their GEAR UP t-shirts, other college clothing, or college colors. Pass out shirts to new GEAR UP students. Have students decorate a small paper shirt with the college they want to attend and then tape it to the front of their locker.



**Resource:** Cut Out Shirt 1 or Cut-Out Shirt 2

## **Pep Rally**

Invite a guest speaker from a local college, apprenticeship program, or the community to share their educational journey and why education beyond high school is so important.

# Additional Activity Ideas

- Post photos of teachers outside their classrooms listing majors, extracurricular activities, and other accomplishments.
- Get your school or local paper to do a story highlighting GEAR UP success stories.
- Ask students to do a quick video of why they want to go to college and share it on social media using #MTGEARUP.
- Create a GEAR UP Dream Wall. Have students write or post their academic, professional, and personal goals on the wall
- Ask coaches to explain NCAA requirements for getting into college.  
(<http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future>)
- Have students write a letter to their future selves about what they hope to achieve in school, college and beyond.
- Have the computer labs show a #MTGEARUP background with links to the Montana GEAR UP Website (<https://mus.edu/gearup/students.html>).
- Hold a GU Family Orientation night with students, family, and staff.
- Invite college reps to speak at orientation.
- Set up a GU table in the commons during lunch and recruit students to sign up for upcoming campus field trips.
- Encourage students to interview faculty about their educational and career paths.
- Create a raffle for participating students to win college gear (hats, hoodies, t-shirts etc.).
- Host a “Community Success Stories” breakfast, coffee gathering, potluck luncheon or virtual happy hour as a thank you for dedicated GEAR UP partners, volunteers and parents.

# Virtual Events

## **Virtual College Visits**

Just because students can't physically visit campuses at this point doesn't mean they can't learn about what college might be the best fit. Take advantage of virtual campus tours and scan colleges' websites and social media feeds to learn more about what each school has to offer.

**Resource:** The following tools include best practices and resources to help plan meaningful virtual experiences for two- and four-year schools with customizable tools.

- [Get Ready for Virtual Visits.](#)
- [Pathways and Career Exploration Tool](#)
- [YouVisit.](#) Free tour to over 600 colleges nationwide

## **Virtual College and Career Learning**

The following activities from NCCEP's Career & College Clubs have been modified for students to complete on an individual basis.

**Resource:**

- [The College Advantage.](#) Learn about some the advantages of a college education.
- [College Life.](#) This activity helps students dream about their future in college and identify their preferred college lifestyle.
- [Dream Board.](#) Help students visualize their future success and dream life. Share dream boards on social media and tag @edpartnerships.
- [Financial Aid Fact or Fiction.](#) Informs students about their financial aid options, and when and how to apply for college financial aid.

# Virtual Events

## **Student/Family Workshop**

- Consider hosting online events or workshops. For example, invite a local employer to serve as a guest speaker or a host a virtual employee panel to share about their job sector, specific work skills important to the career path, and what background was needed to pursue that path. These events could be pre-recorded or hosted live on YouTube, Zoom, Facebook or Instagram Live.
- Consider hosting a college workshop during National GEAR UP Week. The focus of these workshops could be financial literacy, college preparation, planning, and financial aid.

## **Scholarship Workshop**

- Host a workshop to assist students in their scholarship hunt. Help students find and apply for scholarships. Share tips on how to write essays. Encourage students to check out Big Future, Unigo, Montana University System, and ReachHigherMontana for scholarship opportunities.
- Leverage Student Success Agency mentors during GEAR UP week. Task them with talking to your student about college options and scholarships opportunities.



# Additional Resources

## Essential GEAR UP Week Resources

- [Essential Links for GEAR UP Week](#)
- [Free College Readiness Curriculum by OnTrack](#)
- [How to Provide a Virtual GEAR UP Week \(Video\)](#)
- [The Ultimate Guide to a Successful GEAR UP Week](#)
- [College Knowledge Games & Activities for Students and Families](#) - Created by Washington GEAR UP

## Meeting Platforms

- [Google voice](#) (phone) • [Zoom](#) (audio, video) • [Bluejeans](#) (audio, video) • [Microsoft Teams](#) (audio, video) • [Skype](#) (audio, video, instant message)

## Creating Online Content

- [Canva](#) for slide decks and infographics
- [Adobe Spark](#) or [Powtoons](#) for videos
- [Read before you go virtual](#)

## Tech Tools and Distance Learning

- [Flipgrid](#) offers a platform for recording and sharing videos (free for educators)
- [Loom](#) allows you to capture your screen, voice and face and instantly share your video (free for educators).
- [My Blueprint](#) offers a platform for students to create portfolios (free access)
- [Nearpod](#) provides a platform for live lessons.
- [Wevideo](#) provides a platform for student-created videos (free to schools closed due to COVID-19).
- [Zoom](#) offers free resources for educators during school closures.

[Montana GEAR UP Website](#)  
[Montana GEAR UP Facebook](#)